

The 100 - IT and ST by TheVongola11th

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Summary: 353 years after a nuclear apocalypse took out nearly all of human civilization on Earth, support systems within Hawkins spaceship begin to deteriorate. 100 young prisoners from the spaceship are sent down to Earth to test whether the planet is survivable or not. Jane Ives, a 16 year old girl with telekinetic powers, and a part of the 100, becomes a key to their survival.

1. Goodbye, Hawkins

It was like this ever since she got put into that dreaded solitary confinement room.

She would aimlessly stare out through the circular window, her eyes gazing upon the infinite amount of stars that decorated the pitch black sky. The planet Earth was right below, the giant rock of ocean water and survivable land...survivable up until the nuclear apocalypse that happened 353 years ago, to this day.

The remaining survivors of the human race resided on a spaceship, Hawkins spaceship.

Earth was just a distant memory to its inhabitants up until researchers said that Earth could become livable again, a long 300 years after the apocalypse, most likely more.

The girl removed herself from her window, brushing a strand of her shoulder length ombre hair behind her ear. She sat back down on the ground, relaxing her shoulders and pulling her knees to her chest. She didn't believe a word of those researchers; she assumed they were instilling false hope onto everyone else. The view of Earth was unimaginably beautiful though. It was a shame she probably wouldn't get to step foot on that planet in her lifetime.

Her light brown eyes absently trailed off from the sole window in the room to the locked metal door in front of her. Her boredom was getting the better of her once again. If she wasn't staring outside or doodling on the concrete walls, she would keep her eyes on that tightly secured entrance.

She narrowed them, putting forth all of the concentration she could muster. Her eyebrows were lowered and she kept her pupils focused on the sealed bolt. She slowly extended her arm out in front of her, her hand trembling.

She wanted to loosen the lock.

If she did open it, she was sure authorities would catch her in no time

since she was on a spaceship after all, but the satisfaction of breaking out for the first time would be a huge middle finger to them. It would give them the idea that she was a force to be reckoned with.

She knew she didn't deserve this treatment. Locked up like an animal just for being born with telekinetic abilities was more than unfair.

Suddenly, the door burst open, the loud noise causing her to instinctively back away.

Her eyes went round and her lips were parted at the sight in front of her. For a second, she thought she managed to overcome the potent sedative they would administer to her on a daily basis but instead, several guardsmen in uniforms with guns strapped to their holsters broke in.

"Prisoner 11, face the wall."

Her lips suddenly trembled, not in fear, but in anger.

"What's going on?" She managed to say.

"We're not here to answer questions. Stand up and face the wall," One of the men repeated.

Much to her dismay, the girl, referred to as prisoner 11, stood up and did as told.

"Hold out your right arm," He ordered.

Prisoner 11 froze, a midst of confusion entering her mind.

"Your arm, prisoner 11," He repeated, an impatient lilt to his voice.

She gradually brought out her arm, her hesitance and suspicion not leaving her. She felt her heartbeat race when she felt something tight being secured around her wrist. She darted her eyes to the right, noticing a thick metal bracelet around it. Before she could start to muster up any worst possible case scenarios, she felt the guard aggressively swivel her around and push her towards the open door.

They reached outside her cell, to the main prison room. Prisoner 11

saw the familiar rows of cells stacked on top of each other. Through the darkened corridors, she saw light emit out of the opened solitary rooms. She could hear the usual commotion of the prisoners, their raucous voices drilling through her ears and echoing against the walls of the giant space. What was different was that other uniformed guards were dragging them out of their cell rooms, for the same reason she got dragged out. Some were resisting more than others.

Was this it?

Was this the culling?

Those questions abruptly entered her mind.

Her fear skyrocketed, it feeding into her initial assumptions. *They were going to do a sweep of all the prisoners.*

She had no idea what came over her, but panic overtook all the rationality she had left. The prisoner instantly jerked her elbow backwards, striking the guard behind her in the stomach hard. When she felt his grip on her loosen, she tried hitting him again, but another guard restrained her. She jerked her head back, crying out in pain when she could feel him twist her arms.

"Let go of me! Let go of me!" The girl cried.

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"Jane! Don't fight them!"

The girl, Jane, saw a familiar face barrel her way through the armed men. It was a woman with long, messy blond hair that was loosely tied down – she wore ordinary civilian clothes unlike the many guardsmen she wormed her way through. Jane tried to remove herself from the tight holds the men had her in to get to her but they didn't budge.

"Mom, Mom! W-what are you doing here? It's not safe–"

"Jane, listen to me," The woman said, her hands on either side of her daughter's shoulders.

"You have a minute, Ives," One of the armed men said.

"They're killing us, aren't they? We're running out of oxygen so they have to kill off prisoners to make up for that--"

"No, no. Jane, they're not killing anyone today," Ives interrupted, in a calmer voice, "They're sending you to Earth."

Jane's eyes were unmoving, her mother's words rendering her speechless. It was too unbelievable in her own right. All of the premonitions she's had about Earth's survivability and the fate of the human race in respect to that were immediately shut down with her mom's last sentence. She stood frozen, arms restrained and all, waiting for her mother to continue...to explain further.

"They're sending you down, to test whether the planet is survivable. They're giving you guys a second chance at life. You guys get to be the first in 353 years."

She could feel her eyes water at this realization. Whether it was excitement or betrayal, she didn't know what to feel. She lowered her head, blinking her eyes several times to clear them. Getting locked up in a room for the mildest of crimes, some inmates eventually being executed after an initial review, enraged her. The president and his council were very strict on population control due to limited oxygen and supplies on the spaceship, but it was still inhumane to her.

However, her long awaited dream of stepping foot onto Earth was now a possible reality.

That meant she had to say goodbye to her mother. Hopefully, this wouldn't be her last one.

"Jane, you'll be okay. We'll be with you guys every step of the way," Ives said, noticing her daughter's quiet snuffle. Jane often was very resilient, she hid her negative emotions, feeling like she would burden the ones closest to her if she showed them.

"Okay," Jane quietly said, her voice weaker.

She quickly brought her daughter into a firm hug in which Jane returned.

"I love you, Mom."

"I love you too, Jane."

Not long after she felt a needle imbed at the side of her neck. Her eyesight immediately became blurry as she lost her balance, dropping to the ground.

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Jane snapped her eyes open the moment she heard loud whirring sounds. Her entire body was warm and she felt an immense amount of dizziness. She saw dozens of other prisoners carefully buckled in seats; inclining her head, she saw some of them strapped to the edge over top of her and those across from her. To her surprise, all of them were young civilians around her age, give or take a few years. She briefly looked downwards and saw that she herself was strapped to a seat as well.

They were inside the dropship, ready to head for earth.

The rowdiness of the other passengers momentarily distracted her before she took in the appearances of the ones near her. Perpendicular from her, she saw an older male with ginger hair shaped into a mullet. He had an intimidating presence; someone not to mess with or get on the bad side of. The boy was speaking to a group of equally menacing boys around him. Unfortunately she listened in on their conversation, among the many others that were going on.

"...cause if it weren't for that son of a bitch Hopper, I wouldn't have to sneak my ass out in here for my sister," He said.

"Fucking wannabe sheriff," Another boy next to him added, he had short blonde hair with a thinner build, "He'd probably suck Ted's dick if he could earn that title."

A chorus of laughter was heard among the group. Jane lowered her head, trying to drown out their voices. They weren't helping her nerves one bit.

"Well, the more people he can catch for the pettiest crimes, the closer

he gets to it," The ginger haired guy continued.

"Honestly, I'm glad we're leaving Hawkins. They never cared about us; good riddance to them," Another male in the group said.

"We're probably going to die before we even land, Steve. Don't get your hopes up," The blonde one said, a sneer on his face, "This whole trip is a death sentence."

"Whatever, Bowers."

"Don't fucking call me that, Harrington."

Jane's stomach tightened when she could hear a few whispers here and there about her. Being known as one of the few resident telekinetics on the spaceship earned her the gossip. Known for being trapped in solitary confinement for months at a time without much interaction with anyone else except for her mother also piqued the interest of people.

She saw the lights around them dim.

Her heartbeat quickened and the loud chatter around her suddenly turned into quiet murmurs.

The whirring of the ship became louder, the engines masking the noise of the passengers.

"Is this it?" She could vaguely hear someone say.

"...Y-y-yeah right to our d-deathbeds," Another guy said to the first person.

Jane's breath hitched when she saw a screen light up in front of her. It was the president of Hawkins himself, Ted Wheeler.

"Prisoners of Hawkins, I have an announcement to make," He said, "You've all been given a second chance. As president, it is my hope that you see this as not just a chance for you, but a chance for all of us, a chance for mankind itself."

Everyone's attention was on the screen, some people not even noticing that the ship began its descent.

"Hey there's Ted Wheeler's son!" Jane heard someone shout near her, "Your father can rot in hell!"

Her eyes were glued shut, her lips tight, barely registering the voice. All of her concentration was placed onto Ted's important words and the uncontrollable shaking of the dropship. She could feel her stomach drop as it kept on descending. She didn't want to know how fast they were going.

"...We have no idea what is waiting for you down there. If the odds of survival were better, we would have sent reinforcements," Ted continued, "We want you all to know that we're sending you because your crimes have made you expendable."

Jane's breath shuddered, her knuckles were turning white at how tight her grip was on the arms of the seat. Some of the other passengers seemed to be in the same state of distress as she was, some unable to contain their rapid and shallow breathing, someone quietly chanting, "We're going to die," and a few others not moving an inch at the sheer terror that they felt.

On the other hand, some were treating it as some sort of sick joyride.

"...The drop site has been chosen carefully," Ted's voice rang through her ears, "Mount Mirkwood. It was a military base built underground before the last nuclear war. It was stocked with perishables and other important supplies that can sustain 300 people max up to two years."

"Remember, your first objective is Mount Mirkwood. You must locate those supplies immediately if you want to survive."

Jane made sure to remember those last words of Ted's.

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"Hey, speak to me. Distract me or something."

Jane opened her eyes and turned to her left, just now taking notice of the boy who was seated beside her. He had friendly brown eyes and

wavy raven black hair that framed his face. He looked to be one of the prisoners that were her age, pale skin with a tall and lanky build that marked the growth spurt of a boy in his mid-teens. She didn't recognize him among the many others she was with, but she couldn't avoid the kindness in his voice, it was something she needed after being locked up her whole life.

The boy shut his eyes for a second as the dropship shook, the roaring sound of the ship getting louder as their descent into Earth continued.

"Okay," Jane finally spoke, keeping his eyes on him. She was just as frightened as he was, sweat forming on her temples, "What's your name?"

"Mike Wheeler, short for Mike," He replied, before facing her, "What's yours?"

Jane's eyes were unblinking for a second, just now realizing that Ted Wheeler's son was right next to her. To her defense, she didn't know him by looks alone. Being isolated in a small room for the majority of her life did that to her, save for a few visits from her mom and rare trips to the outside.

"I...I- t-that's the first time someone has asked me that in ages," She finally said.

Mike bit his lip, now looking ahead.

"Because everyone in this ship knows who you are?"

"Yes," Jane grunted as the ship's descent went down faster, she tried her hardest to ignore all of the alarmed voices of the other prisoners around her, "I-I thought you'd just refer to me as E-Eleven, prisoner Eleven, or...or even telekinetic Eleven."

"Well, I want to know what you'd like to be called," Mike said.

"Before we probably die?"

"We won't die," Mike reassured.

Jane squeezed her eyes back shut as she squirmed in her seat; the warmth of the ship was rapidly increasing. She could see sparks emitting out of the corners, the outside of the ship beginning to burn.

"El, short for Eleven."

"...It's nice to meet you, El."

Jane felt a rare smile creep on her lips, however short it was.

"Why did you get sent down with us?" Jane said, her voice quieter, "Your father—"

"—Did what he had to do," Mike interrupted, not wanting to explain further, "Let's leave it at that."

Jane nodded, a bit perplexed by his answer, but didn't want to make this situation more uneasy than it was. She winced, the shaking getting more and more unbearable.

"Mike, don't stop talking," She said, needing his distraction.

"Okay," He immediately replied; he asked the first question that came to mind, "Why did you decide to nickname yourself after your prisoner number?"

Jane looked at him, noticing the genuine interest in his voice.

"...Because it's kind of my mark," Jane said, "That's...that's who I've been my whole life. Trapped inside—agh!"

Jane felt the ship suddenly lean frontwards, causing herself to jolt forwards against the strap of her seat. The walls of the dropship trembled as they got weaker, white sparks flashing around the corners and the dim lights above them rapidly blinking. There was smoke emitting from the walls. It looked as if the ship could give way at any second.

Jane tried ignoring the yells of the other passengers, but she couldn't.

She didn't want her last few seconds alive to be on a burning ship speeding towards Earth. Her goodbye to her mom wasn't enough, she

truly didn't believe she would see her again the moment she was knocked unconscious. She wanted the comfort of adequate closure, but without it, the idea of death scared her more than anticipated.

She didn't want to die.

She took in a deep breath, waiting for the inevitable.

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She could feel her heartbeat aggressively push against her chest, the adrenaline and anxiety not leaving anytime soon. Her face was drenched in sweat, the edges of her dyed hair sticking to the side of it.

She snapped her eyes open, breathless when she saw the other passengers, just as stricken as she was. Some of them sported injuries, stray debris hitting them on the way down. The smoke from the harsh landing made the air around them thick and warm. She could barely breathe through it.

She grunted, a nagging pain on her forehead. She touched it, almost grimacing when she saw fresh blood on her fingers. She turned and saw Mike, leaning forward on his seat. His movement was slow and a trickle of blood went down over his cheek.

"...Mike—"

"I'm okay, just a bit taken aback," He interrupted, facing Jane, "...We survived at least."

Jane lowered her head, a small chuckle escaping her lips.

"You're bleeding."

She raised her eyebrows, her attention back to her injury. She gave Mike a glance over, a bruise on his temple and blood escaping it.

"*You're* bleeding," Jane said, her mouth curving up into a smile. She was rather amused at this boy's obliviousness to his current condition.

"Let's hope Mount Mirkwood has enough first-aid kits if we get out of here."

"Yeah," Jane quietly said, a solemn tone to her voice. To her own admission, she didn't believe they would make it out of this ship, the radiation soaked air outside knocking them dead the minute they opened the entrance.

Her attention returned to the other passengers.

Many of them were causing a ruckus, complaining about the rather rough landing they had. Mike ignored those who were speaking ill of Ted Wheeler, those directing their anger towards the President – the one responsible for forcing them into this mission.

She took notice of the ginger haired boy with a mullet who immediately unstrapped his seat, minutes after they landed. He looked at his surroundings, some other passengers were unmoving, nervousness entrapping whatever else they felt. Some of the others were already up, but they weren't taking any steps further.

"What are you idiots waiting for? Let's go," The boy said aloud.

He was about to press the lever that would open the trap ship entrance.

"Wait! Don't!" Jane interrupted before she could think.

The older gave her an exasperated look, the side of his lips forming into a sneer.

"Well, well, well...the infamous Eleven actually joined us on this journey. It's the first time I've seen her out of her cell in months."

Jane's heartbeat rose, her grip tightening on the edge of her seat. She glared daggers at the ginger haired boy.

"Shut up, Billy."

Jane's eyebrows rose at Mike's chilling voice.

"It's okay, Mike," She said, placing a gentle hand on Mike's shoulder.

Mike gave her a sympathetic look before retreating back to his silence.

"It's El, by the way," She continued, her soft voice calmer than anticipated, "We don't know if the air outside is survivable. It could be toxic."

"Then we're dead anyways," A girl with long waist-length red hair behind Billy spoke up. Her arms were crossed.

"Max--"

"What?" Max interrupted Billy, the annoyance on her face very apparent. She quickly assumed the boy would tell her to simmer down and let him do the speaking or something else typical of a smothering older brother.

"Do you want to do the honors?" Billy asked. Max's expression softened from one of irritation to one of anticipation. She gave her older brother a rare smile.

"Okay," She said, giving him an eager nod.

Jane loosened her hold on her seat, watching Max step towards the lever that would cause the entrance to open. They would see what the surface of Earth looked like for the first time in person.

"Are you guys ready?" She said, her voice louder.

She could hear a few jubilant cheers among the nervous murmurs. Everyone closely watched her as she made way for her towards the lever. She took in a silent breath, clutching the handle.

"...Here goes."

That was when she pulled down the lever.

2. Mother Nature

The 100 prisoners could only gaze at what lie ahead of them. Astonished would be an understatement. None of them could move an inch, their feet supposedly glued to the floor of a ramp that extended from the opened dropship.

It was beautiful.

What they heard in books, documentaries, and spoken word did not compare to seeing it in person, right in front of them.

It was a lush forest, surrounded by deciduous trees that only allowed a small portion of the sun to poke through. The ground was fully covered in dirt and rocks along the way, overgrowing shrubs, bushes and fallen leaves occasionally decorating the landscape. It was absolute proof that there hadn't been a mark of human civilization in this place for the past two hundred years. Nature had made its course and the air was once breathable again, fully breathable for the 100. Jane averted her eyes from the saturated green landscape and glanced back at the others who all looked ready to step off from the ship, including the redhead with long overflowing hair. Mike was a bit disturbed by her sudden energy.

"We're back, bitches!" She yelled out, thrusting her arms upwards. Her voice was jubilant, her bright blue eyes gleaming with enthusiasm. She whirled back to the others, the same amount of anticipation on their faces as well.

That was when they all ran out of the dropship, yelling and cheering in sheer happiness, happiness at the fact they found a new home – one that was vast compared to the restrictive Hawkins spaceship and one with a plethora of locations that were yet to be discovered. Jane shifted her position towards Mike to avoid being pushed over by the energetic crowds of ex-prisoners.

She glanced at the dark-haired boy who gave her a comforting smile in return. Mike could notice the slight uneasiness on Jane's face. Her worried expression didn't show it but she was excited and captivated at the view in front of her. She just as much wanted to run out into

the forest, like the others, without a care in the world, but she couldn't afford to do that...not at the predicament they were currently in.

"Is everything okay?" Mike asked.

Jane shook her head.

"...They dropped us off at the wrong mountain."

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Hawkins Spaceship

A man in uniform rubbed his temples, trying his hardest to tune out the angry shouts from outside of the office room he resided in. He had a rugged appearance, a short but scruffy beard framing his face. He wore a long-sleeved beige police uniform with matching beige slacks, a golden badge pinned to the front pocket of his shirt. The sophisticated badge set him apart from other officers and guards and marked his status as the chief of law enforcement of Hawkins.

Crowds of adults, many of them parents and guardians of the 100, had gathered outside of his office. They had a plethora of questions after quickly finding out their children were sent off in a dropship.

There was a brief scuffle outside before the door burst open.

"Hey! Hey! Lady! You can't go in there!"

A woman with messy brown hair and loose fitting clothes pushed it open, forcing herself in.

"Where was my son taken?" She immediately asked, marching straight to the desk.

"You can't just barge into my office—"

"You work closely with Ted Wheeler, you know exactly where they are," She interrupted him. Two guards closely followed her in, ready to drag her out until the cop motioned them to stop with a quick and silent hand movement.

The man sighed, knowing the inevitable outcome. Ted and his people were currently out of reach, the president currently recovering from an attempted assassination by a group of boys who were also a part in the 100. Because of that, the cop was the person everyone came to...or attempted to come to.

"Please! He's my son! He's only 15!" She continued, her voice pleading.

"Listen, Joyce– Mrs. Byers," He quickly corrected himself, "We're not allowed to disclose that information. Ted's council forbade us. He's afraid that there might be an uprising against him."

"We're about to have one since none of you are telling us anything," Mrs. Byers argued, gesturing towards the closed door, where the crowds stood behind, "We deserve to know what happened to our children."

The man didn't say anything. His hesitance to say any more clearly showed on his face.

"What happened to you?" Mrs. Byers continued, her impatience and anger arising, "The old Hopper I knew wouldn't follow Wheeler around like a mindless lapdog."

The man, Hopper, was visibly hurt at her last words. Byers was close friend, or at least used to be, until the dire situation the citizens of Hawkins faced forced him to adhere to the strict protocols of the spaceship that Ted and his council enforced. He knew Ted was trying to do what he thought was best for the human race and the very limited resources they had. That meant engaging in sacrificial actions that many would consider barbaric – sending 100 young convicts to a planet no one had set foot in 350 years. As someone who worked directly under him, Hopper felt he was doing a disservice to the fate of all mankind if he strayed away from that.

However, he felt disgusted at himself for not being able to give any form of closure to an old friend...one that was very loyal to him in the past.

"They're on a dropship headed to Earth," Hopper forced himself to

say.

Joyce could only look on in shock.

"We're unable to communicate with them. We thought the bracelets would allow us to do so...but we misjudged the distance the communications system could work in and now we can only check whether they're alive or not."

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"What?"

Mike and Jane absently watched at the groups of others either running around in sheer joy, their loud cheers and 'whoops' hard to ignore. Some of them were closely examining the view that surrounded them, eyeing the trees and the ground like it was all a huge museum exhibit. That was expected since none of them have seen an actual tree in person before.

Jane couldn't blame them for feeling the way they felt, but she and Mike seemed to be the only ones focusing on the mission at stake.

"There would be a huge entrance to an underground bunker, probably marked Mount Mirkwood, but there's just trees, endless trees, ahead of us," Jane continued, trying her hardest not to get irritated at the lack of awareness the other ex-prisoners had at their current mission.

Mike fished out a folded brown paper from his pocket.

"What's that?" Jane asked, attentively leaning in closer.

"A map of the general area. They gave them to us when they were leading us to the dropship."

"I wasn't awake then," Jane mumbled, recalling herself getting knocked out.

"So, Mount Mirkwood is here," Mike's voice brought her back to attention.

He pointed at an area drawn with numerous mountains, the words 'Mount Mirkwood' printed over them.

"And where are we?" Jane asked, looking up at Mike.

Mike's briefly eyes darted upwards, taking in the sights that surrounded them. Jane copied his movement, trying to get an idea as well, but the saturated forest they were surrounded in made it near impossible to do. But it was clear they were at a higher elevation, the area slowly sloping down as it got further from the dropship.

"You said they dropped us off at the wrong mountain, so we must be at Mount Maple, cause that's the only other mountain on this map," Mike slowly brought his finger towards the lower corner of the map, "...which is all the way down there, if you're right."

Jane lowered her shoulders and parted her mouth open at the realization at how far they were going to have to walk.

Mount Mirkwood was practically on the opposite end of Mount Maple.

"...It's going to take us days to get there."

"No, not days. Not if we walk non-stop," Mike shook his head, "Judging by the parameters, it will take about five hours, if we walk fast."

Jane bit the bottom of her lip, her eyebrows creasing into a frown.

"That means we need to leave now, if we want to get all the supplies and food we need soon," She said, looking down at the soil. She having difficulty simmering down her frustration, frustration at the others who didn't seem to be questioning how they were going to get supplies to survive this unfamiliar planet they were sent to.

"Yeah, but we obviously can't do this ourselves," Mike said, rubbing the back of his head. He looked ahead in the same direction Jane was looking at, watching the raucous and loud prisoners.

"I'll ask if anyone wants to come with—"

Jane's voice came to a sudden halt when she felt someone collide straight to the back of her. She almost fell forwards, quickly catching her footing before that could happen.

"Hey, watch where you're going--"

Mike stopped when he saw the one responsible was a familiar boy with messy brown hair. He was Troy, one of the boys who plotted to kill the president. Jane heard him brag about that, loud and clear, among the other chatter of the prisoners in the dropship. Behind him stood Billy and a few of his lackeys that decided to latch onto him the minute they got off the ship.

Troy had pushed a much smaller kid, a short-statured one with greenish hazel eyes and golden brown hair shaped into a bowl cut, into Jane. The other boys behind them shared quick chortles and chuckles in amusement, while Billy kept a more stoic expression. There was a visible amount of fear in golden brown haired boy's eyes, a sharp contrast to Troy's menacing ones. From what it looked like, he and his friends seemed to be taunting and bullying the poor kid. Pushing him into Jane was probably a reckless accident.

"Wheeler is getting a little too big for his boots, huh?" Billy sneered, stepping closer to Mike.

"Stop being such a nuisance, Billy," Mike said, "We're trying to do things that actually matter here."

"Like what, white-knighting your new girlfriend?"

"No," Mike said, his voice solid, "Like heading to Mount Mirkwood to find the supplies we need so we don't die out here."

"Because your ass of a father said so? Screw him."

Mike's fists became tight, his patience running thin. He ignored the bystanders that came to watch the heated confrontation between the two. He could have sworn he heard some of them cheer Billy on from the last words he said. Mike wasn't all that surprised. Back at the space station, his father wasn't all too popular as president of Hawkins. The two males of the same height gave each other firm

glares, until Mike spoke.

"Fine, if you want to die from starvation, be my guest."

"I think we should let Ted Wheeler's privileged son do the work for once. Doesn't that seem fair to you guys?" Billy spoke in an elevated voice.

"More than fair," Troy said, his eyes darkening.

There were also several shouts and 'yeah's' in agreement from the observing bystanders, a lot of them having shared animosity towards Ted Wheeler.

"Hey, do you want to come with us?" Jane spoke up, ignoring the commotion and glancing at the young boy with the bowl cut. He stood a couple of feet behind them, his meekness apparent. His shoulders were tense and his arms were wrapped around himself. He looked to the back of him, quick to assume that Jane was speaking to someone else. He only then realized she was speaking to him, as her stare was glued onto him.

"Okay," He nodded, after slight hesitation. He'd much rather go than stay with a bunch of meatheads who were pushing him around like some sort of joke.

"You two," Mike began. He placed his hands on the shoulders of two other boys his age, their backs to him, and spun them around until they were facing him. One of them was shorter with unruly blond locks of hair that were barely tucked under a baseball cap. The other was a taller dark-skinned boy with a camo headband strapped around his forehead.

"Are you guys coming?" He finished.

"Sure, I guess," The dark-skinned one shrugged, "Nothing else to do here."

"There's no harm in a little adventure," The curly-haired boy added, a more enthusiastic air to him, "I'm Dustin and this guy over here is Lucas."

"Yeah, don't ask how I put up with him," The dark-skinned boy, Lucas, said, earning a playful shove from Dustin.

That was a total of five people going to Mount Mirkwood alone. They all knew that wouldn't be enough to bring in sufficient supplies in a day's time, but no one else seemed to want to go. They'd much rather put their stubborn pride ahead of them and make the 'privileged Mike Wheeler' do the work instead for a change.

"Hey, I'm coming too!"

The girl with the long, fiery red hair strode towards the five, stopping right beside Lucas and Dustin.

"No you're not, Max," She heard Billy say behind her. Her older brother stopped in his tracks the moment he heard his sister's confident voice.

"And why not?" She said, crossing her arms.

"Because you're my sister. I promised Dad I wouldn't let you out of my sight. I promised him I would protect you."

"Well, he's not here with us, is he?" Max retorted, "I don't need protecting, Billy. I'm going to make the most of my time while we're out here without anyone to tell me what to do."

Max saw Billy's unmoving expression. Her face softened, knowing she could aggravate her brother even more if she remained angry at him.

"I'll be okay," She placed a comforting hand on her brother's shoulder, before sauntering back to the other five, "We're the only ones down here. We're already protected as is."

Billy gritted his teeth for a second. He couldn't argue against that.

"Fine, just this once."

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The six kept up a quick pace as they headed into the forest, Jane and Mike keeping a head start while the other four closely followed. They

made sure not to step over overlying branches and rocks. The uneven terrain and saturation of the trees made that a challenging feat.

Lucas picked up his speed, no longer walking beside Dustin and matching his pace with Max's.

"Brother of the year award goes to..."

"Are you being sarcastic or...?" Max raised an eyebrow as she kept her stare on Lucas.

"Just don't get good vibes from that guy, it's nothing really," Lucas replied.

"He's a little rough around the edges when you see him at first, but he's not as bad as people make him out to be," Max said.

The boy with the green-hazel eyes and bowl cut briefly shifted his eyes towards Max before keeping his stare on the ground, his mind occupied with the rocks and protruding tree roots that he could slip on if he wasn't careful.

"You're his sister, of course you'd say that," Dustin added, ignoring the glare that Max gave him.

Their bickering went on for a few minutes, it being background noise to the more serious Jane and Mike. Those two were too busy mapping out the coordinates they were in.

"Let's hope your whole Mount Maple theory is correct, Michael, and we don't end up getting lost with no way to get to Mount Mirkwood..." Dustin said.

"I'm a hundred percent sure of it; I have to be," Mike replied, "...and it's Mike."

"Sorry, Mike," Dustin apologized, earning a shake of the head from Lucas.

His attention changed to the hazel eyed boy; he hadn't said a single word since they left the dropship area, "You're not much of a talker, are you?"

The boy looked at Dustin, snapping out of his little reverie.

"I don't really have anything to say," He shrugged.

"He speaks!"

"Really, Dustin?" Max rolled her eyes. She looked at the boy, her blue eyes widening. It looked as if recognition dawned upon her, "Wait, aren't you from the Byers family?"

The boy raised his eyebrows.

"Will Byers, right? You're the one who got caught stealing extra medicine for your mother."

"She would have died if I didn't," Will retorted, quickly assuming that Max's tone of voice was accusatory.

"It's admirable actually, that you'd do something like that. It's fucked you get punished for it," Max replied.

Will remained quiet, his lips tightening into a straight line. Unlike the other ex-prisoners, he couldn't warm up to the environment around him. He did think the view surrounding them was something special and incredibly breathtaking in person, but being stripped away from his family quashed any good mood possible. He wanted to be with his mom and brother more than anything. Either that or he wanted them to come with him. He hated being apart from his family.

He purposely slowed down his walking until he was behind the other four.

"Water!" Mike broke the silence.

The six could vaguely see a small lake ahead of them, mostly hidden from overlying branches. They immediately ran at a fast pace, pushing those aside.

"Holy shit..." Dustin breathed out, the second they saw the sight ahead of them.

Magnificent was how they'd describe it.

It was within a groove, large rocks and trees surrounding it. The water was a clear, saturated blue, no sign of pollution marring it. The sun peeking out through the trees ahead reflected off of the slow moving ripples. The six carefully made their way down a slight downward slope so they could get a closer view of the body of water.

Mike crouched down, reaching towards the edge of the lake. A smile crept up on his features when he felt the cool water running between his fingers. He briefly looked at Jane who crouched down next to him; she couldn't resist grinning at Mike's childlike interest of the lake – something that none of the six didn't think they'd ever come across in their lifetime.

"My older sister would love this," Mike spoke up, raising his head to once again marvel at the view of the lake.

"When the others know that we've survived and they eventually come down, they'll get to see all of this," Jane said. She stood up and looked at the others who were equally fascinated, their animated voices filling the air.

Dustin's attention was suddenly on Lucas who couldn't take his eyes off of Max.

Max was in the process of taking her shirt off, before revealing a spaghetti strap top under it.

"I think I might actually love Earth..." Lucas grinned, looking back at Dustin. The latter was trying to hold in his laughter at his friend's uncharacteristic gawking.

Jane, however, wasn't so amused at this.

"Guys, we have to go," She said.

"Come on, loosen up, El," Max said, now in her tank top and a pair of spandex shorts she had under her jeans, "We can afford to lay low for ten minutes or so."

Jane resisted the urge to roll her eyes. Instead, she crossed her arms and stepped back to Mike who seemed to be in the middle of mapping out the particular lake on the map.

"Hate to say this but she's right," Mike said, eyes still on the map, "I'm trying to see if the lake is drawn on here too. That might help us check if we're going in the right direction."

"Right there. It's southwest from Mount Mirkwood," Jane replied, pointing towards an empty spot among the X's that were supposed to illustrate the vast forest. Seconds later, she heard a loud splash.

"Woo!" She heard Dustin cheer as Max jumped into the lake.

The redhead came to the surface, brushing her wet hair out of her face.

"Are you guys coming in?" Max grinned.

Lucas and Dustin looked at each other, before nodding, excited smiles on their faces. Beside them, Will rubbed his arm with his hand, no indication of him wanting to jump.

Will's eyes trailed from Lucas and Dustin who were in the process of taking their shirts off to the deeper ripples on the surface of the lake that had just formed. None of the others seemed to notice. Max's back was to it, her freckled face in a full grin while Jane and Mike were busy strategizing their plan. He furrowed his brows when he could see a long slithery mass move along the surface, it creating those ripples.

"Max! Get out!" Will exclaimed.

"What?" She raised her eyebrows.

"There's something in the water!"

Will's voice brought everyone else's attention. Dustin and Lucas immediately stopped at what they were doing while Max looked to the back of her.

Her face was frozen when she saw a giant mass moving at high speed towards her.

"Guys—!" Before she could swim out, she felt something grab her by the leg. Within a second, she was swiped underwater.

"Max!" Lucas exclaimed.

When he was about to jump in to rescue her, Max's head popped back up to the surface, her hands flailing around as she was struggling to keep upwards. She cried out, feeling something sharp on her leg. Her breathing became labored when the water thrashed around her.

Within seconds, she let out a bloodcurdling scream when she felt herself being dragged across the lake.

"We have to distract it!" Dustin exclaimed.

Before Lucas could grab a large rock to throw at the creature, he saw Jane suddenly fling her arms to the side. One of the large rocks adjacent to her flew across them, landing in the lake and letting out a huge splash. The others could only look on in shock as they had seen Jane use her powers for the first time. Jane, too, was surprised her powers managed to work. She was sure the last dosage of drugs they gave her would last until the next day.

Lucas interrupted the ominous silence.

"Did you get it?!"

Jane squinted her eyes. Although there was no sign of movement in the water and Max was no longer thrashing her arms about, the redhead was nowhere to be seen.

"I don't..." Jane's voice trailed off, keeping a careful eye.

"There!" Dustin exclaimed, pointing ahead of him.

Max suddenly came to the surface, gasping for air. Lucas quickly sped past the others, jumping into the lake. Max noticed and trudged as fast as she could, not risking a second to look below to see if the mysterious sea creature was inches behind her. Max extended her arms, latching onto Lucas the moment he was within reach.

She let out shaky and panicked breaths as Lucas and Mike helped pull her out.

"I got you, Max. I got you," Lucas quietly said.

They stopped at the edge of the lake, Max and Lucas dropping on their sides. The others immediately ran towards them. Max glanced at her leg, a fresh wound on the side of it. From her periphery could see Jane rip out a loose sleeve from a sweater she wore under her jacket to wrap around the bleeding cut.

"Oh god..." Max breathed out.

Before Lucas could say anything, Max gave him a tight hug.

"Thank you, Lucas," She whispered, before she could fully catch her breath.

Lucas ignored the warm feeling in his cheeks.

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"Are you sure you can keep going with us?" Mike asked, the six resuming their five hour trek to Mount Mirkwood.

"I'm fine. I didn't lose much blood anyways. It's just a little scrape," Max said, undermining the severity of her cut, "My brother's going to watch me like a hawk after we come back, so I want to enjoy the most of this before that happens."

"So this is what they locked you up for," Dustin said, watching Jane keep her hand pressed against her nostrils.

"Was it underwhelming?" She asked, slowly removing her hand from her nose. She frowned, her fingers coated in blood. The downside to mind-control, nose-bleeds that followed the use of it every time.

"No, just...I've never seen telekinesis up in person," Dustin said, a small chuckle gracing his voice, "Even for a throw of a rock, it's impressive."

"That's as much as I can do," Jane replied, "I was never allowed to use my powers so they injected a special sedative in me once a day to keep that from happening, for as long as I could remember."

"Still, it's pretty sick. Now you'll get to do a lot more now that we're down here, away from them."

Jane felt a sudden warmth at that realization.

"You want to know how I got down here?" Dustin suddenly asked.

"...Oh no, not this again," Lucas rolled his eyes, he looked at Jane, "You can say no. It's just going to be a huge brag fest about himself and his engineering degree."

"Hey, it's not my fault you decided to tag along. You can't be mad at me forever," Dustin shrugged.

"If you hadn't kept the controls in automatic then we wouldn't be here right now. I kept telling you we couldn't change them with how little time we had left before law enforcement came!"

"And I keep telling you the computer malfunctioned!" Dustin retorted, "Besides we saved a whole ton of oxygen up there because I set the gate controls to manual! You of all people should know that!"

"Whatever, Dustin!"

Jane shook her head, her smile not leaving her. She swore those two could go on and on.

"Anyways, short story: we wanted to go out on a little spacewalk. They caught us and the rest is history," Dustin said to Jane, "...I wonder if it was worth getting caught since I don't even see being sent to Earth as a punishment. This planet is an open book, there's so much to discover and learn now that we're down here."

"...I wish I could have your optimism," Jane said.

"Trust me, you don't want it. That's what gets him into trouble," Lucas replied.

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Hawkins Spaceship

In one of the control rooms, dozens of screens were lined up together on wall, showing one hundred separate pictures, each being a prisoner that was sent to the Earth. Their names and ages were

written in clear words under their mugshots. Several people who operated the systems in the control room looked on, some of them with clear disappointment on their faces while others looked confused.

"Two people are dead, so far," A man said, his eyes glued onto the screen.

"...Radiation must have killed them," A woman added, distress in her voice.

"If that was the case, everyone would be dead by now," The man argued, shaking his head, "This was two hours after the ship landed... approximately at 2:15 P.M. They must have ventured off and injured themselves badly to the brink of death."

"Who are they?" The woman asked, apprehension in her voice.

"Billy Hargrove and Henry Bowers." He said, gesturing to their dimmed pictures on the screen. He glanced at another woman beside him, her trembling hand over her mouth.

"Mrs. Wheeler, Michael will be okay," He said to the visibly distressed woman.

"You don't know that, Callahan," She said, her voice became shaky, "Why did my son have to do such a thing? He's going to get himself killed..."

"Wheeler didn't have to send him down."

"Our family is not above the law," Mrs. Wheeler said, her head lowered, "...He knew what he was doing and I tried to talk him out of it. Nancy tried to talk him out of it, but it fell on deaf ears."

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"Mount Mirkwood awaits!"

"What?" Mike looked at Dustin.

"Look! The sign!" The curly haired boy said, pointing towards a metal

sign several yards across of them. On it, the letters 'Mount Mirkwood, 10 miles ahead' vaguely engraved on it. Only thing that separated them from the sign was a deep groove that went down at least 20 feet.

"Holy shit, your plan actually worked," Max said, a surprised glint to her eyes.

"How are we supposed to go to the other side?" Will spoke up.

"There's actually a rope over here," Lucas replied, his hand on a thick rope that was tied to a tree.

They all looked at each other for a moment, surprise among their faces – surprised something like that managed to survive the apocalypse and an extra 300 years.

"So, who wants to go first?" Dustin asked.

The other five were silent, unmoving from their current positions. They looked down at the deep groove, the area intimidating them.

"I'll go," Lucas spoke up.

"Really?" Dustin raised his eyebrows, surprised at his friend's admission. Lucas was often the skeptic of the two, not being one to engage in risky activities. Compared to the adventurous Dustin, he always played it safe.

"Yeah, since none of you seem to be up for it," Lucas said, "If this rope breaks off and I end up falling 20 feet to my death, you guys can thank me for my noble sacrifice."

"Very funny, Lucas," Max rolled her eyes.

Lucas grabbed onto the rope, tugging it slightly to test its firmness. He tightly held onto it, stepping back quickly before he leaped off the edge and swung. The others watched on with much suspense, slightly afraid that it might not hold and break off. He swung over the great distance of the groove before jumping off and roughly landing on the other side.

The others looked on, watching Lucas get himself back onto his feet.

He raised his fists up high, cheering at the sudden adrenaline rush he felt.

Dustin joined him, jumping up as he hollered.

Jane felt a smile on her lips, unable to contain her happiness at the contagiously cheery mood everyone was in. She felt a wave of happiness envelop her...being sent down with these people wasn't all that bad. In fact, it was a relief. Being secluded from other people for so long was almost torture for her, she craved human contact and the boisterousness of it all. She glanced at Will who even managed to sneak in a smile, however small it was.

"Mount Mirkwood here we come-!"

Dustin's voice came to an absolute halt when a spear flew into Lucas's chest area.

His brown eyes were wide agape, his hand trembling over the embedded spear. Lucas instantly fell backwards, passing out.

"Lucas!" Dustin yelled.

Before any of them could move, Lucas' body was dragged into the thick forest ahead of them.

"We have to hide!" Jane spoke up, her voice panicky.

She pointed towards a ledge that would mask them from view. They immediately scrambled towards the area, keeping themselves out of sight. Jane felt her vision cloud on the sides, her heartrate shooting up. She could feel her chest rise up and down, unable to subdue her shaky breathes.

This couldn't be happening. She had to be dreaming.

"Oh my god...oh my god..." Dustin whispered, "...We're so fucked."

"Lay low you guys," Mike motioned the others to crouch down. Max was the last to do so.

They heard an echoing scream.

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"...He's still alive," Max breathed out, instantly recognizing Lucas' voice.

"We can't go in there."

"So what, you're basically saying we leave him in there to die?" Max retorted, her eyebrows low.

"That's not what I'm saying, Max," Mike said, his voice serious.

"Okay, tell us, then," Max said, trying not to let her temper get the best of her. Though, she was visibly frustrated.

The others looked at Mike, waiting for the dark-haired boy to say something. Dustin's lower lip quivered, still stricken that his best friend was stabbed right above the chest with a spear, only to be dragged to who knows where. Jane alternated her stare from Mike to the area where Lucas last stood.

"We're not the only people here," Mike began, his voice shaky at this new realization. The others gave him attentive nods, all except for Will, whose eyes were lowered, his frown never leaving his face.

"We'll definitely end up like him if we swing down there. That spear hit him with pinpoint accuracy. We need to come back, with weapons."

It was silent for a few moments, none of them having much of a clue where they would find any useful weapons. However, they did know they'd be able to come up with something by the time they went back to the dropship area.

"What if we're too late? What if they already killed him?" Max said.

"We don't know that yet," Mike replied, "That's why we need to hurry."

3. The Rescue

"She wants me to do what?"

"Richie, you heard me," A girl with short, wavy tresses of dark brunette hair stood across from the person she spoke to. Impatience marked her features as she waited for 'Richie' to speak. The younger boy sat upwards from his previously slouched position, closing a thick binder full of papers over his desk.

"That's the first time aunt Karen has spoken to me in months," Richie said, an amused smirk forming on the side of his lips. Richie Tozier was nearly an exact image of his cousin, Mike Wheeler: pale skin, pitch black hair, prominent brown eyes, and freckles decorating his cheeks. The only noticeable differences that set them apart were Richie's curlier hair, round glasses that nearly covered his face, and his disorderly and flamboyant dress sense. Their contrasting personalities were miles apart too, Mike's no-nonsense temperament often clashed with Richie's laidback character.

"You did kind of insult my father."

"I did that for a good reason. He's not a good man," Richie said, his eyes briefly darted towards the opened door of his workspace. He returned them to Nancy, a suspicious frown marking his features, "... Isn't it really convenient she decides to speak to me only when she needs something?"

"Richie, I'm serious," The girl twisted her lips, her annoyance quickly arising, "You're not doing this for my mother, it's for your cousin."

"Baby Holly? I've always liked her."

Nancy briefly averted her eyes away from him. Richie always made it his mission to aggravate her and Mike whenever they had the chance to interact with each other. His strained relationship with the Wheeler parents didn't help their current circumstance. The brunette let out a sigh, one she made sure Richie would hear.

"You think everything is a joke, don't you?"

"I'm going to be in deep shit if I get caught," Richie said, his voice serious, "They'll definitely lock me up once they catch me stealing extra parts."

"Then I'll take the blame," Nancy said, her eyes burning with desperation, "I'll tell Law Enforcement I made you do it."

"They might float you, Nance. You're over 18."

Richie's frightening words were right. At random, they executed people over 18 for doing unforgivable crimes such as stealing more than their fair share of supplies that were considered vital to the survival of the human race. They often justified it because of the very limited resources the spaceship had.

"Your boyfriend got sent down too," Nancy suddenly said.

Richie's body language immediately stiffened, shock overtaking his face. He stood up straighter in his seat, waiting for Nancy to elaborate as he heard her loud and clear. Though, the girl wouldn't budge, her eyes boring into Richie's. She wanted him to say something instead.

"What?" Richie finally said, his eyes quickly narrowed, "You're lying."

"My Mom has direct access to the list of all the prisoners who were sent to Earth," Nancy replied, "Eddie Kaspbrack was one of them."

Richie could only look on in silence, his eyes lowered on his desk top while his fist was curled up beside him. He remembered visiting Eddie just a day ago in his cell, blabbering away at him for hours before he was dragged away by the guards. It dawned upon him that he wasn't in this spaceship anymore, not knowing until now angered him. He wasn't one to become angry so easily.

"You want to see him again, right?"

"He's my boyfriend," Richie could only say, "Of course I do."

"Then you have to find a way to find spares to fix that mini dropship thing."

Richie hesitated, continuing to keep his stare downwards. The surprise wasn't going to leave him anytime soon. He was already surprised a goody-two-shoes like Eddie Kaspbrack would get himself into prison, but the boy being sent down alongside dangerous criminals to a "foreign" planet was unreal, in it of its own. Adding to that, his cousin wanted him to take an unauthorized trip to that planet using one of the spare escape-pods that were stored for emergency use only. It was a lot to ask of a person at once, especially since Nancy's request was so impromptu. Richie wanted to continue to argue with her because of their already uneasy relationship with each other, but there wasn't enough time to – not when people's lives were at stake – people that they loved.

"...Okay, fine, I'll do it."

Nancy's face softened. She knew Richie would do anything for Eddie, he was really the only person he'd do anything for. Using him as a tool to manipulate Richie into putting his safety on the line didn't sit right with her, but she and her mother so badly wanted to know if Mike and the others were doing okay. He was still alive but not knowing left her restless and unnerved, as much as she hated to admit.

"Thank you, Richie. I owe you."

Back at the camping site the other ex-prisoners set up, there was utter chaos.

"Hey, there's one right there. Get him!" Bowers shouted.

Several feet away, a boy with dark brown hair and a bright yellow t-shirt ran at a quick speed the moment he noticed Bowers pointing at him. He briefly looked to the back of him seeing Bowers and a couple of others run after him, their steps faster. He gasped for air as his heartbeat ricocheted against his chest, his labored breathing getting the best of him.

He stopped in his tracks when he bumped straight into Troy.

"Troy! Get his bracelet!" Bowers shouted from behind.

He tried pushing 'Troy' away, but the stronger and taller brunette grabbed onto his right wrist, holding him in place. He brought his left fist upwards and slammed it against Troy's chin, causing the boy to grunt in pain.

"Fuck!" Troy clenched his teeth, trying to restrain the other boy who was attempting to wriggle himself out of his grasp.

The small boy yelped when he felt himself get shoved to the ground. He cried out, feeling Bowers' knee pressing against his back.

"Get off of me!" The boy cried.

"Not until you hand us your bracelet," Bowers said, a maniacal grin forming on his face. He eyed the metal strapped onto the boy's wrist like a piece of meat, a contrast to his absence of one.

"I'm not giving you anything!"

"You don't have to make this hard on us, Eddie," Bowers continued, pressing harder on the boy's back. He almost smirked at the louder yell the boy made as he felt his knee dig deeper into his spine, "We're doing you a favor; we're doing you *all* a favor."

Eddie winced, gritting his teeth harder. He could hardly breathe since his stomach was squished in between Bowers' knee and the ground.

"Hey! Get off of him!"

Bowers looked ahead and saw Max heading towards him, her strides quick. Behind her were Mike, Jane, Dustin, and Will, the other four trying to match her fast pace.

Max furrowed her brows when Bowers wasn't budging.

"Are you deaf?" The redhead pushed.

"Hey, Billy's bitch sister. How about you mind your own business?" He finally said, unmoving.

She gritted her teeth at the pejorative, but her expression changed when she saw Billy come out of a tent that was built moments ago.

"What the hell is going on?" Max said, marching up to her brother.

"Rebellion against Hawkins. They won't know about our whereabouts if we destroy the bracelets—" Billy said. He quickly stopped when he noticed the sleeve wrapped around Max's leg, blood pooling at the area. His jaw twitched before he gave Mike a frightening glare, "What the fuck happened to her? Where did you take my sister?"

"I'll explain everything if you tell him to get off," Max said, pointing directly at Bowers who still had a foothold on the boy referred to as 'Eddie'.

Billy let out an exasperated sigh.

"Henry," He said.

Bowers hesitated, a scowl on his features. He reluctantly removed his knee from Eddie before standing back up. He kicked Eddie across the stomach, eliciting a pained shout from the boy.

"We *will* get him soon, Billy," Henry said.

He left, not giving the others a second look.

Jane and Mike didn't hesitate to pull Eddie up once he was out of their sight.

"Where are the supplies? You guys came empty-handed," Troy spoke up.

"Guessing Mike's plan was full of shit. Typical Wheelers," Billy scoffed.

"We got attacked," Dustin spoke up.

"By what?" Troy said.

"By who, you mean," Dustin corrected him, "There are others here. We're not the only humans alive on this planet."

There was a brief silence amongst the group before the typical questioned murmurs from other prisoners came about. Some of them

were clearly trying to process Dustin's last words. Their long-standing assumption about there being absolutely no mark of human civilization on Earth since the apocalypse was immediately quashed within seconds by a sentence.

"Is that why the kid with the headband is missing?" Billy could only say.

Max nodded, a downtrodden expression marking her features.

"Where's your bracelet?" Mike said, noticing Billy's wrist was devoid of one. His eyes trailed over to Troy who seemed to be missing one as well.

"We took them off," Billy, as-a-matter-of-factly said.

"Are you serious?" Mike said.

"You don't see it on my arm anymore, do you?" Billy said, raising his wrist up.

"You idiots—"

"What was that, Wheeler?" Troy taunted. Mike ignored the menacing and intimidating front Troy put on.

"The reason why they gave these to us was so that they'd know the Earth is survivable. They assume you're dead if you're not wearing one. If they think we're dropping dead like flies, they won't come down for us."

"I'm impressed, Mike. You caught on quicker than expected," Billy resisted the urge to chuckle.

"You think this is a joke?" Mike said, "You're not only killing them, you're killing all of us, including your friends."

"We can take care of ourselves," Billy said, "If they come down here, we'll be treated like prisoners again. You, along with the privileged ones, will have it good. Others like your little friend there—"

He pointed towards Jane who helped Eddie up.

"—are most likely going to be locked up somewhere because they'll continue to think she's a threat."

Mike furrowed his brows. Unfortunately, Billy raised a point. Unable to be tested on because of other priorities that Hawkins had, the girl was locked up like an animal for most of her life. She was seen as something that posed a danger to society within the spaceship because of her power's potential to do an enormous amount of damage. The mystery of the origins of her ability also confused and even at times frightened them.

The council felt they couldn't gamble with this discovery so they decided to take mercy on her and lock her up the moment she was discovered instead of executing her.

"When the time comes, we'll deal with that. I'll make sure they listen to us."

"We don't have time for this," Jane spoke up.

"El—"

"What matters now is that we need to find Lucas," She continued, interrupting Mike, "Mike, you and the others should rest for a couple of minutes. I have this under control."

"What are you going to do?" He raised his eyebrows.

Her eyes quickly darted to the holster Billy had secured to his belt, a gun strapped to it.

"You have telekinetic powers," Billy said, "Why don't you use them to flip shit?"

"I've been trapped in solitary for ten years, drugged to the point of where I was unable to use them," Jane answered, her patience thinning, "I barely know how to lift a rock."

"Convenient."

"You have a gun," Jane said, "...I saw it peeking out of your coat."

"You want to use me as your weapon since you have no one to fight back with," he said.

"Yes," She plainly said, giving him a short nod.

"What's in it for me?"

"Whatever we find in the bunker...food, weapons, housing—" Jane stopped, then continued, "You and your friends can have the best of it."

For a short moment, it was silent between the two, the flaps of the tent they were in blowing towards the inside being the only noise. Jane stared him down, her light brown eyes unwavering. She didn't know what the possible ramifications of this plan would be, but she knew Mike wouldn't be okay with it. All she knew was that they had a better shot with armed people than with her currently lackluster abilities.

"Only if I can come with," Billy finally said. He tapped the shotgun buried into his holster, "Not letting this gun out of my sight."

"Okay," Jane said.

"So far twenty-four of them have taken their wristbands off," Hopper said, gesturing towards the dimmed pictures, "...And out of all of them, these particular prisoners have been arrested for violent crimes."

"Where are you going with this?" Callahan asked.

"We guess they're taking them off by choice, probably as some sort of mass-orchestrated rebellion," Hopper replied, "We should have expected this."

"Troy Hutcherson, James Nelson, Henry Bowers, Patrick Hocksetter, Reginald Huggins, Victor Criss, and Billy Hargrove are among them... weren't those were the boys who attempted to assassinate Ted Wheeler?" Callahan asked.

"Yeah, that's all seven of them."

"What do we plan on doing next?"

"We got new reports about oxygen levels from the medical department. Dr. Owens told us oxygen levels are dropping down at a much faster rate than we initially hypothesized. He also received information about routine maintenance of the CO2 scrubbers. Those are already failing and carbon dioxide levels are on the rise."

"What does that mean for us?"

"...He consulted with the President and he's been considering another purge."

There was a stark and deafening silence among the two men. They knew what that meant.

"How many people this time?" Callahan asked.

"300."

"Why is he so quick to question a purge? You said the prisoners were taking the wristbands off themselves."

"I told you, we guessed that, we're not sure. We also think something out there could be killing them, something natural," Hopper said, "We don't have enough time to send a group of reinforcements to spend what could possibly be days before they actually find something."

"What's the window before the purge?"

"Two days from now. The council will have to make a decision by then."

Mike distractedly paced around an isolated corner, reluctantly waiting for Jane to do whatever she had in mind. Why it had to involve Billy of all people, baffled him. He didn't want him being involved with anything vital to the safety of their people, not after what he was doing with the wristbands. However, something irrational in his mind told him he could trust Jane, that she would make the right decision, that she had the right kind of judgement. Maybe she had the old-age idea of keeping their enemies closer.

Mike's breath hitched when he was suddenly pushed to the ground. He grunted when he felt his back collide with the rocky terrain. Before he could even think about getting himself up, his brown eyes were wide, absolute shock on his features when he realized who exactly pushed him down.

Will Byers was looming over him. His hazel eyes were darkened and his lips were tightened. He looked furious.

"Hey, what the hell-!"

Mike couldn't finish his sentence when Will brought his fist back and punched him on the side of his face. Mike's head recoiled to the side, his cheek grazing the rough terrain. As fast as Will brought his first fist, he brought the other one, this time colliding with Mike's nose. The taller boy immediately brought his hands up, grabbing onto Will's arms and pushing them away from him. Will gritted his teeth trying to remove Mike's stronger hands off of his arms.

"Let me go!" He shouted, writhing his arms back and forth.

Mike pushed the shorter boy off of him, quickly getting to his feet. He clutched his nose, his face full of hurt and confusion. Will's cheeks were a bright crimson red, he wanted to hurt Mike some more.

"What's wrong with you?"

"It's...it's all your fault," Will's breath shook, his voice slightly weaker than before.

Mike raised his eyebrows, his confusion pronounced.

"What are you even talking about?"

"You know exactly what I mean!" Will exclaimed, his voice louder. He curled his fists together, his hands trembling beside him, "This entire situation that we're in! You- your father enforces the laws. He jails and kills people for the smallest offenses, h-he sends me down for protecting my mother- he sends one hundred people down here to die! We're nothing but disposable to him!"

His green-hazel eyes were glossy, adding to the fury within them. It

was honestly frightening for Mike to see the usually quiet boy explode on him like this.

"Your anger is misplaced, Will...I'm not my father," Mike spoke in a calmer voice. He couldn't add to Will's anger, "I know you want to blame me since my dad isn't here but I'm not the one who put us in this situation."

"You couldn't at least convince him not to do half the things he's already done? Pretty sure he'd listen to his only son who's just as elitist as he is."

Mike ignored that personal jab. He couldn't let his burgeoning emotions get the better of him.

"It's not that easy and you know that. He has a job to protect the last survivors of the human race. He has to make hard decisions like these all the time."

Will's eyebrows dipped at Mike's last sentence; his unquestioning logic and seemingly full acceptance of this whole situation infuriated him.

"...I was right," Will began, his voice quiet, "You're exactly like him."

Mike could feel a sudden surge of anger at those words.

"Listen—"

"No, *you* listen, Mike," Will interrupted, taking a couple of strides to get closer to the other, "Whoever agrees with what your father does is with him and just as responsible. You and the many other people who mindlessly support him have the power to put a stop to what he does and come up with a better solution."

"If you haven't noticed, he sent me down here too! I'm no exception to the rule!" Mike retorted, raising his voice, "...and you don't know me as well as you think you do."

"What did he send you down here for?" Will asked, his tone still hostile.

Mike opened his mouth, but couldn't get himself to say his next words. His throat felt like it was constricting, it physically keeping him from uttering anything else.

"Of course..." Will muttered, not expecting Mike to say anything.

Before the shorter boy could march away, he stopped mid-step when he saw Jane, Dustin, and Max walk towards them from a faraway tent.

"Guys, I think we might have an idea on how we can get Lucas back—" Jane's eyebrows scrunched when she could see the fresh bruise on Mike's cheek and his reddened nose, "Mike, what happened to you? Are you okay?"

Mike absently clutched his cheek, touching the bruise he just got.

"Nothing," He lied, "I tripped over a few rocks."

Jane didn't buy a single word he said, but Mike's stern face silently told her not to press on this matter any further. His eyebrows rose when he could see Billy not too far behind her. Beside him was Henry, who also had a gun as well.

"Are they coming?" Mike asked, motioning towards the latter two.

"Yes," Jane said, she shifted her eyes towards the older boys who were heading towards them before looking back at Mike. Her voice was quieter, "They snuck in guns without anyone finding out."

Mike was still utterly confused, both at Jane's calm tone and the fact that Billy wanted to help them, "Why would Billy of all people want to come with us?"

When Jane was about to answer, Billy and Henry were within hearing distance.

"Are we leaving now?" The red-headed male said, "We have to make this quick."

Jane nodded. She ignored Mike's confused stare. She didn't want to end up backing down because of second thoughts. If Lucas was still

alive, they would risk losing the only possibility of saving his life.

"Hey, Steve!" Billy shouted towards the nearest person. The brown haired male was busy helping others stack firewood on top of each other, "Make sure my sister doesn't leave this camp."

Max rolled her eyes, knowing that it would come down to this. She gave Billy a long and hard scowl. When she saw Steve about to approach her, she raised her hands up, indicating that she didn't want him to say anything before she stormed towards the dropship entrance.

Billy's lips quirked up in amusement when he noticed Mike's unmoving glare on him.

"Eleven says we get dibs on the best Mount Mirkwood has to offer, if we agreed to help you guys save your friend," He explained, "Don't try to fight this, Wheeler."

"Who said I was going to?" Mike replied; he looked at Jane, "Are you ready?"

"Ready when you are," She said.

"Okay then, let's go," Mike said.

When the younger two were out of earshot, Henry looked at Billy, suspicion clouding his features.

"That's not why we're really going, is it, Billy?"

"We need his bracelet," The red-head said, cocking his head towards Mike, "If they think he's killed, that's going to lessen the chances of them coming down. His father won't come down for him."

"...Same with the other people who are important," Henry said to himself.

"Exactly," Billy said.

"Now that makes a lot more sense," Bowers said.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Within the dropship, Steve saw Max move from her previously seated position to the ladder that led to a second floor. Her boredom was quickly catching up to her and she wasn't in the mood to argue with anyone at the moment.

"Don't worry, Mom. I'm just checking on the kid your friend nearly crushed to death."

"You and your brother are smartasses," Steve said.

"I'm nothing like him," Max said, her hand on the ladder.

"You're only saying that cause you're angry at him. Billy's just trying to protect you, Max."

"I've heard that enough today," She said, "And that's not why I'm mad at him."

Before Steve could say any more, she climbed up the ladder of the dropship, not wasting a second to look back.

Upon reaching the upper floor, she saw Eddie sitting beside another guy, a taller boy with neatly trimmed raven hair. They hovered over a first-aid kit, the taller boy trying to pry the kit open. His reddened cheeks and pressed jaw made it clear he was struggling.

"Hey, let me help," Max said, making her presence known.

She took it from him.

"T-t-they give us a f-f-first-aid kit, only t-to make i-it impossible to open," The taller boy said.

"Where did you find this?" Max asked.

"It was attached to the wall beside one of the seats," Eddie replied.

Max grabbed a short metal pole that broke off from the dropship interior before smashing it against the edge of the kit. With much ease, she managed to open it.

"O-oh, okay...or w-we could do that."

"Your cut," Eddie said, "It hasn't been disinfected."

"It's not a big deal..." Max said, absently touching the area where she got the cut. It was a sizeable one that marked her mid-thigh, the fresh blood could still be seen through the two layers of her jeans and the ripped sweater Jane gave her. She almost winced when she accidentally pressed at it too firmly.

"Yes it is...imagine all the bacteria that formed already, especially on a cut that big. Just covering it up alone won't help," Eddie spoke, his voice fast, "...Plus, it's been nearly half an hour since you came back. Imagine if you leave it alone, you could get really sick and then you might even have to get your leg amputated which would be—"

"Okay, E-Eddie w-we get it," The taller boy, who went by 'Bill', interrupted. He looked at Max, "His m-mom is a nurse...s-s-she k-kind of instilled this paranoia o-onto him."

"Better to be paranoid than unsafe," Eddie retorted.

"Pass me the disinfectant," Max said, her hand out.

"You need to clean it up first," Eddie said.

"You're really taking all the precautions, huh?" The redhead said.

"I'd rather do whatever it takes to stay safe in a place like this," The boy countered.

After Max disinfected her wound and carefully wrapped a bandage around it, out of sight from the boys, the three started talking amongst each other. Currently, they had nothing else productive to do. They were all counting on Mike and the others to rescue Lucas before they would ultimately continue their journey to Mount Mirkwood.

"You don't seem like the type to cause trouble," Max spoke up, eyeing Eddie up and down, "Why did they lock you up?"

"I fought a guard," Eddie shrugged. Bill gave him a sympathetic look,

not at all buying the nonchalant front that Eddie was trying to put on. Being a good friend of Eddie's, Bill knew his general personality was far from nonchalant; he was a constant state of nerves.

"You?" Max's eyes widened, surprised that someone feeble-looking like him would get into such a physical altercation. To her, he looked like he could barely hurt a bug.

"Yes, I had a good reason to," The boy replied, playing with the cuff of his shirt, "He said some really nasty things about my father...weeks after he passed away."

Max and Bill give him sympathetic looks.

"What about you?" Eddie quickly changed focus, breaking the unnerving silence. He looked at Max.

"I vandalized the council's quarters, as a protest against their whole criminal justice system. Ironical how they lock me up for that," She said, averting her eyes from the other two, "My brother was told in advance by someone that I was one of the 100 being sent to Earth. He decided to get...himself into trouble so he would earn a seat on the dropship with us. He put aside his anger to keep his promise to protect me."

Bill and Eddie glanced at each other for a moment, quickly recognizing her older brother as the not-so-pleasant Billy Hargrove.

"What did h-he exactly do to g-get himself d-d-down here?" Bill asked.

Max's heartbeat rose.

"I don't like to talk about it," She said, her eyes lowered.

"You think Dustin's still mad at you?" Jane asked.

"I understand if he is...Lucas is his best friend. He'd want to be there for him," Mike replied.

Due to Dustin's status as an engineer in training, which he so proudly boasted about to the others, him being in danger was proven to be a

liable risk than the other ex-prisoners. He was an important asset not only on the spaceship but on the unfamiliar grounds of Earth; his skills would prove to be extremely useful in dire need. Will, on the other hand, opted not to go, saying what they were about to do was a "suicide mission", to a much agitated Mike. Truthfully, he didn't want to be anywhere near the Wheeler.

"Wheeler!"

Mike stopped in his tracks, causing Jane to do the same. He looked to the back of him, seeing Billy catch up to him, Henry keeping a close follow.

"What?" Mike raised his eyebrows, a bit of annoyance arising at the officious tone Billy used when he called his name.

"Are you confident he's still alive?" Billy continued, "This is probably all just a waste of time."

"Why do you decide to bring that up now?" Mike said, confused Billy would ask that question thirty minutes into their trek towards the Mount Mirkwood checkpoint.

"The kid got a spear pinned to his chest. He's pretty much a goner."

"He was screaming seconds after he was stabbed," Jane argued, "If it hit his chest he would have died instantly."

Jane continued to walk forwards, Mike slightly lingering behind as Billy's words echoed in his head.

Max, Bill, and Eddie's head snapped towards the direction of the loud knocking noise that came from the entrance hatch of the dropship.

"W-Who is that?" Bill quietly said.

Max did a quick shrug of her shoulders, she was just as confused as the other two.

Before she could crawl any closer towards the entrance, she saw it open, Dustin's head popping out from it.

"Oh thank god, I almost thought it was Steve," Max said.

Dustin carefully shut the hatch.

"I thought you went with El and Mike," She continued.

"They didn't want me to come," The curly-haired blonde said, "Mike, self-declared leader of the party, said me being in any sort of danger was a huge liability. I'm an engineer, after all. What good use am I if I'm dead?"

"That's k-kind of s-s-stupid," Bill spoke up.

"Yeah, it is," Dustin continued, his uncharacteristic anger not leaving him, "I've known Lucas my whole life; he's my best friend. We've been there for each other more times than I can count. It doesn't feel right I stay here doing nothing while he's slowly bleeding to death."

It was silent among the four.

"You said you're an engineer, right?" Eddie said.

"Technically in-training, but I'm pretty skilled," Dustin bragged.

"Okay, so this might be a lot to ask, but is it possible to turn these... bracelet-things into a radio device...to communicate with Hawkins?"

"...A lot to ask to someone you haven't met before," Dustin added, his frustration lingering. His inability to help rescue his friend put him in a perpetually sour mood.

Max gave Dustin a side-eye before looking back at Eddie.

"Eddie Kaspbrack and Bill Denbrough," Max spoke up, gesturing to the two boys to the back of her, "Eddie and Bill, this is Dustin Henderson."

"N-nice t-to meet you, Dustin," Bill said, shaking Dustin's limp hand.

Max resisted the urge to cringe at the awkwardness among the boys before she spoke again.

"So, can you do it?"

"I can try," Dustin could only say, he looked at Eddie, "You want them to know that we're okay?"

"Yeah," Eddie replied, "My boyfriend didn't know I was one of the 100 to be sent down. He might have found out by now so he must be worried to death. I'd like for him to know I'm not dead."

"That's actually pretty sweet," Dustin said, "M-minus the terrifying parts, of course."

"I guess," Eddie shrugged, his eyelids down turned.

"Won't y-y-your b-brother be mad y-you're okay w-with us trying to c-c-contact Hawkins?" Bill said to Max.

"I don't care. He's not my keeper."

"Okay then, let's do this," Dustin said, interrupting the tense silence, "I'm going to need a wristband."

"You can use m-mines," Bill said, extending his arm.

Dustin gathered scraps from the dropship, ones that looked like they could be in working condition. The others watched on in silence, observing Dustin build his makeshift radio device. After finishing, he got Bill to extend his arm to do the finishing touches.

A small spark emitted from Bill's bracelet, causing Max and Eddie to flinch away on impulse.

"Son of a bitch!" Dustin cursed.

Bill stared down at the wristband, the bracelet around his arm turned a coal black from the over-expenditure of the electricity.

"What? What happened?" Eddie said leaning in closer, "Are you okay, Bill?"

"I-I-I'm f-f-fine," he said, not looking Eddie in the eye.

"One bracelet alone must be too weak to give any sort of signal like that," Dustin said, "Sorry for ruining your wristband, Bill."

"It's okay, y-you tried, at least."

"Hey, look..." Mike said, his voice barely above a whisper.

Jane's eyes darted to the ground, following where Mike was looking exactly. She saw fresh spots of blood, decorating the rocks that covered the ground. Above her, she saw a thin tree branch that was snapped at an unnatural angle.

"We're going the right way," Jane said, her voice relieved.

Not too far behind them, they saw Billy and Henry trudge towards them, the two older boys confused at their sudden halt.

"Why are we stopping? Are you backing out?" Billy said.

"No, we know where they're taking Lucas," Mike replied, ignoring Billy's usual condescending lilt. He pointed to the tatters of blood, "That's his blood."

They paused for a moment.

"Now would be a good time to take out your guns," Mike said.

Mike looked at Henry and Billy who were unmoving. The two looked at each other, their silent communication puzzling a much impatient Mike. Henry gave a slight nod to Billy before they returned their stare to Mike.

"Not until you hand us your bracelet."

Jane and Mike were momentarily surprised by Billy's words, but they knew they should have expected something this.

"We don't have time for this," Mike said, his voice angry.

"Neither do we," Billy said.

"If you want to rescue your friend, we suggest you take it off," Henry

added.

"There's no way I'm doing that."

Jane shifted her eyes between the three boys. Her eyes lowered towards their holsters. If they weren't going to help, she'd have to take them by force...or at least attempt to.

"Then we're not going any further," Henry said, "We could easily just kill you right now if we wanted to, but we're not bad people. We'll take mercy on you, no matter how much your existence annoys us."

Before Jane could begin, the four heard a loud groan echo throughout the forest.

"Lucas!" Mike said.

Without thinking, Jane and Mike ran towards the source of the noise, not giving enough time for Billy and Henry to say anymore.

"Oh my god..." Jane's voice was shaky.

Lucas was tied against a tree, the boy held in place by thick string. His hands were secured together, his arms overlapping each other against a branch. His brown eyes were half opened and his breathing was infrequent and labored. The boy was barely awake, just holding onto consciousness.

Jane was the first to notice the absence of the spear that hit him. Instead, there was a giant, cauterized wound of some sorts that replaced it.

Mike and Jane instantly ran towards Lucas, not wasting a second to wonder how this all came to be. Billy and Henry weren't too far behind them, although they were hesitant with their steps. They, too, had the same amount of disbelief.

Before he could reach Jane, Mike felt the ground under him give way.

"Mike!" Jane exclaimed.

With fast reflexes he quickly held on to the edge. His eyes were wide, realizing there was a deep pit below him, spikes sticking out from the ground. It most definitely looked a trap built to lure unsuspecting people or rather unwelcome trespassers. Mike squeezed his eyes shut. His hand was losing traction.

"El, untie Lucas!" Mike exclaimed.

"But-!" Jane stopped when she saw Billy and Henry enter the forest opening, Billy being at a much closer distance to the fallen Mike, "Billy, get him out of there!"

Billy's eyes were unmoving for a moment, he ignored Jane's frantic shouts at him. He stared down Mike; the younger boy was holding onto the edge of the pit for dear life. All Billy could look at was the shiny metal bracelet that was wrapped securely around Mike's arm. His blue eyes never left that wristband.

This was the perfect opportunity for him, he didn't know if he'd ever get one like this again.

"Billy!" Jane shouted again.

Billy snapped out of his reverie, seeing Mike's fingers slowly slipping from the edge. The boy would fall to his death if he let go. He would get impaled by those spikes.

Moments passed before he grabbed onto Mike's arm.

He pulled back, giving Mike a better foothold to get himself out.

Henry gave Billy a confused glance, not expecting the latter to cave in to Jane's desperate pleas so easily. Before Mike could help Jane rescue the half-conscious Lucas, the four heard echoing roars.

"What was that...?" Mike spoke in a hushed voice.

Jane's eyes darted over to Billy and Henry who had their guns in hand, attentively holding them up. Mike and Jane kept their distance behind the two older boys, their eyes concentrating on the thick bed of forest ahead of them.

Mike squinted, able to see two black cougars run through the thick layer of forest. The four-legged animals were running at a quick speed, heading straight towards them. One of them kept a lead, leaping a couple of meters with the sheer force of its hind legs.

"Shit!" Henry yelled.

Billy repeatedly pressed the trigger of his gun, the booming gunshots echoing throughout the forest. The animal fell forwards to its death, after it took a few staggered steps from the bullet wounds.

"Watch out!" Jane shouted, before Henry could take out the second one.

The three boys jerked their heads to the direction of Jane, seeing another cougar appear to the left of them. The animal's steps were quick, its sharp angular paws inching towards them.

Henry gritted his teeth and pressed on his gun, bullets coming out of it at lightning pace. Jane briefly looked back at Billy, seeing him curse out loud as his own gun clicked when he attempted to press the trigger. The redhead shoveled his hand into his pocket, frantically trying to grab more bullets when the second cougar was gaining up on him.

The animal surged forwards, its mouth opening up to show its razor sharp teeth. Before Henry could change his direction to shoot at the cougar that was about to rip Billy apart, Jane suddenly flung her arms sideways, without a second to spare.

The animal instantly flew backwards, slamming into a tree. The loud noise from the impact startled the three boys before they watched the animal's body fall back down like a limp ragdoll.

Billy and Henry could only look on in complete shock, their eyes wide open and their jaws slack. Their eyes were glued onto the animal who lay dead, like the other two they killed with their bullets. The sheer force of its body recoiling backwards and slamming straight into the trees in front of them was enough to render them speechless. They had never seen something so remarkably scary.

"El!"

Mike's attention quickly changed to the lightheaded girl. Blood profusely dripped out of her nostrils as she felt herself falling forwards. Before she could catch her fall with her own hands, she felt two arms catch her in time.

"Mike...we have to untie Lucas," She mumbled into his shirt, her voice was quiet and her entire body felt limp.

"R-right," he said, he looked down at Jane who was unmoving. He kept his hands firm on her upper arms to keep her from tipping forwards. Her power must have exhausted her to the brink of being unable to move on her own, "Let me sit you down somewhere."

"I'm fine, just untie him," Jane repeated, slightly pushing herself off of him.

Mike bit the bottom of his lip, upset by Jane's refusal for help. The girl seemed to be the type to put others safety above her own, a naturally selfless person. He looked to the back of him once more, seeing Jane sit herself down, before he headed back to Lucas.

"Am I going to do this by myself?" Mike called out to Billy and Henry.

Billy let out an annoyed puff of air from his nose, annoyed by Mike's condescending remark. Jane did save his life after all, it wouldn't be fair to let her friend struggle alone.

"Keep watch, Henry," Billy said, earning a short frown from the blonde.

"Forty-six signals have been terminated."

"...They're dropping like flies."

Within seconds, the entrance door opened, startling the other five council members – Owens, Newby Powell, Bannon, and Kline. Under the president's rule, the five men were the ones who called the shots when it came to decisions imperative to the survival of the spaceship among many others. However, their startled looks changed to ones of sheer disbelief. There was an ample silence amongst them when they

saw their president enter the room.

"Mr. Wheeler!" Newby exclaimed

"You're still healing, I don't think you should be here so soon-"

"It's important I be here for this," The president said, interrupting Dr. Owens. He took the seat that was pulled out for him. The others looked on as Ted was seated at the council's roundtable, shock still enveloping their features.

The other council members looked at him, silently waiting for him to say his next words. He was the one who led them, they always followed.

"How many?" Ted continued.

"46 of their signals have been terminated, President Wheeler," Powell answered, "They're...dropping like flies."

Ted briefly glanced down at the table, he was lost for words. However much he hid it, he did feel guilt at times, but that feeling was slowly increasing as time passed. He felt it was his duty to take such risks if he didn't want to end up with the worst possible case scenario. He hoped sending 100 prisoners down wouldn't prove to be a disastrous mistake in the long run.

"Should we continue with the purge?"

"We have no choice. We don't know if all of them are taking them off voluntarily...we're not actually sure if Earth is survivable yet. There are other prisoners...ones who were imprisoned for nonviolent crimes, their signals are terminated too," Wheeler said, answering Powell's question.

"President--"

"Time is valuable, we can't waste it...not with the short window we have. Sending reinforcements down to communicate with us is too risky. What if they succumb to the same fate as the prisoners and we end up putting most of our people in danger? We need to go on with it."

"That's 4 votes against 2," Dr. Owens pitched in, "The symptoms of oxygen deprivation are already killing people, 315 in the past month. Every day we delay this after the two-day window, fifteen people will die. Since the children are the ones most affected, they'll be the first to go if we keep delaying it."

"How will we tell people? This is the biggest sweep we've done in history, they won't take kindly to it," Newby spoke up.

"I don't know yet," Ted could only say.

"We have to think of something President Wheeler, we only have a couple of days."

"...I'll figure something out. Just give me a little bit of time."

Inside and outside of the closed council room, several guards dressed in their immaculate uniforms were assigned to keep watch. Inside, they stood at the corners of the area, as far from the council table as possible. Their hats concealed most of their face, adding to their cold and unapproachable demeanor. Rather than people, they seemed like props and statues...ones that were assigned to protect the livelihoods of the president and council members. One of the 'guards' stationed inside was noticeably shorter than the others, messy brown hair begging to escape from the cap they wore.

For a second, Joyce Byers thought she was making a stupid mistake. Knocking out a guard and stealing their uniform, just to eavesdrop on a council meeting which was considered confidential was the biggest gamble she ever took.

She was doing something that would land her in jail...which in turn could possibly get her executed.

However, her anger about this predicament overshadowed all the doubt and fear she had left. She thought the president was simply toying with the lives of his own people and treating them like idiots – being secretive and telling them half-truths as an attempt to keep them calm. A mere voting scale of six people was what dictated their lives at this point. It enraged her and many others.

There was no way she could let this slide smoothly.